

4VAC15-50-81

Game: Bear: Validating tags and checking bear and tooth submission by licensee or permittee.

Summary:

This proposal is to remove all references to checking, check stations, and check cards to reflect the requirement for all big game harvests to be reported electronically using either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors Virginia mobile harvest reporting application beginning in the 2021-22 hunting season.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-50-81. Validating tags and ~~checking reporting~~ bear and tooth submission by licensee or permittee.

A. Any person killing a bear shall, before removing the carcass from the place of kill, validate an appropriate tag on their special license for hunting bear or special permit by completely removing the designated notch area from the tag or by electronically notching a tag and reporting the bear using the department's mobile harvest reporting application. Place of kill shall be defined as the location where the animal is first reduced to possession. It shall be unlawful for any person to validate (notch) a bear tag from any special license for hunting bear or special permit prior to the killing of a bear. A bear tag that is mistakenly validated (notched) prior to the killing of a bear must be immediately voided by the licensee or permittee by writing, in ink, the word "VOID" on the line provided on the license tag. All electronically notched tags are permanent and cannot be voided.

B. Upon killing a bear and validating (notching) a license tag or special permit, as provided in subsection A of this section, the licensee shall, upon vehicle transport of the carcass or at the conclusion of legal hunting hours, whichever occurs first, and without unnecessary delay, ~~present the carcass and validated (notched) license tag or special permit to an authorized bear checking station or to an appropriate representative of the department in the county or adjoining county in which the bear was killed or~~ report the kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. At such time, the person ~~checking or~~ reporting the carcass will be given ~~a black bear check card furnished by the department or~~ a confirmation number from the automated reporting system. The successful hunter shall then immediately record the ~~game check card number or~~ confirmation number, in ink, on the line provided on the tag that was validated (notched) in the field. ~~If checked at an authorized bear check station, the black bear check card must be kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, the bear check card must be securely attached to the carcass. If After~~ the kill is reported ~~using the automated harvest reporting system~~, no ~~check card written documentation~~ is required as long as the hunter who killed the animal is in possession of the carcass. If the ~~automated harvest~~ reported carcass is left unattended or transferred to the possession of another individual, written documentation including the successful hunter's full name, the date the animal was killed, and the confirmation number must be created and kept in possession with the carcass until the carcass is processed. If the carcass is left unattended, this written documentation must be securely attached to the carcass. Processed carcass parts of a bear killed legally in Virginia may be transported; however, upon request of any authorized law-enforcement officer, sufficient verbal or written information necessary to properly establish legal possession must be furnished immediately.

C. ~~If the carcass is checked at a bear check station, upon presentation of the carcass and validated (notched) license tag or special permit to the bear checking station, the licensee shall surrender or allow to be removed one premolar tooth from the carcass. If the kill is reported through the department's~~

~~automated harvest reporting system, A~~ a premolar tooth must be removed by the hunter immediately after reporting the kill through the department's automated harvest reporting system. The premolar shall be placed in an envelope furnished by the department and labeled with the hunter's full name, check confirmation number, date of kill, and the sex of the harvested bear. This envelope with premolar and accompanying information must be mailed or delivered to the department no later than 14 days after the close of the bear harvest season.

D. It shall be unlawful for any person to destroy the identity of the sex of any bear killed unless and until the license tag or special permit is validated (notched) and checked reported as required by this section. Successful bear hunters are allowed to dismember the carcass to pack it out from the place of kill, after an appropriate license tag has been validated (notched) as required in subsection A of this section, as long as they do not destroy the identity of the sex, and all the parts of the carcass are present when the bear is ~~checked at an authorized bear checking station or~~ reported through the automated harvest reporting system. Any bear found in the possession of any person without a validated (notched) license tag or documentation that the bear has been ~~checked- reported through the department's at an authorized bear checking station or~~ automated harvest reporting system as required by this section shall be forfeited to the Commonwealth to be disposed of as provided by law.

Rationale:

Beginning in the fall of 2021 all harvest reporting will occur electronically through either the telephone, internet, or GoOutdoors mobile application. Mandatory game checking, a cornerstone of DWRs game management program for more than 70 years, will remain vital for game management in Virginia for many years to come. Thus, it is critical that every hunter report their harvest using one of the electronic reporting systems. Since 2004, DWR has offered some form of electronic reporting, and beginning in 2019, electronic reporting options were available for all species for which reporting is required. In fall 2019, 86% of all deer, 93% of fall turkeys, 100% of spring turkeys, 100% of bobcats, and 58% of all bears were reported through an electronic reporting system.

The proposed amendments remove all references to physical check stations and check cards and adds language in reference to the "e-notch" feature of the mobile application which allows a hunter to electronically notch a tag on their license from their smartphone.